

Cultural Competency and Your School Improvement Plan

In the 2009-2010 school year, minority students made up about 25% of the student population in Indiana.¹ Across Indiana, 4.8% of students do not speak English as a first language, and 46% are on free or reduced lunch.² Cultural competency will ensure teachers and staff address the learning needs of an increasingly diverse student population.

People view the world through the lens of culture— a system of beliefs, values, customs, and behaviors that are filtered through our personalities and experiences. Culture is more than race and ethnicity; it also includes language, national origin, religion, region, community, disability, gender and age. There are both subtle and apparent cultural perspectives that influence the way all people think, interact, and make decisions.

Cultural competency in education encompasses a system of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that enable teachers to work effectively in cross-cultural situations.³ Cultural competency includes the use of knowledge concerning individuals and groups to develop specific standards, policies, practices, and attitudes to be used in appropriate cultural settings to increase student academic performance. Additionally, being culturally competent means being able to function effectively in cultural contexts which differ from your own. Educators skilled in this area facilitate the achievement of all students through effective teaching and learning practices grounded in an awareness of cultural context and the strengths students bring with them to school.

To successfully implement the cultural competency component of the school improvement plan (SIP), achieving cultural competence must be a district- and school-wide priority. Because culture affects every aspect of education, so too must cultural competency efforts. The SIP must consider school leadership, curriculum and instruction, school environment, data-based decision making, and family and community engagement. Becoming culturally competent is a developmental and ongoing process⁴ which begins with having conversations about race and equity, reflecting on one's own culture and beliefs, and gaining awareness of other cultures.

The process also includes looking at and disaggregating data (such as achievement data and graduation rates), exploring what the data reveals and determining a plan to address any inequities

¹ IDOE Indiana K-12 Education Data.

² *Id.*

³ Indiana Code 20-31-2-5.

⁴ Cross, T., Bazron, B., Dennis, K., and Isaacs, M. Towards a culturally competent system of care, Volume I. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Child Development Center, CASSP Technical Assistance Center, 1989. Available at <http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED330171.pdf>.

within student subgroups. There is no one correct way to implement cultural competency, since it depends upon the composition and needs of the school population.

The Legal Requirements

When developing a SIP, designated committee members must consider ways to improve the cultural competency of the school's teachers, administrators, staff, parents, and students as part of the school's professional development program.⁵ Pursuant to IC 20-31-6-2(b), the SIP must do the following:

1. Identify the various subgroups that are included in the school's student population (e.g. racial, ethnic, language-minority, cultural, exceptional learning, and socioeconomic);
2. Incorporate culturally appropriate strategies for increasing educational opportunities and educational performance for each group in the school's plan; and
3. Recommend areas in which professional development is necessary to increase cultural competency in the school's educational environment.

Cultural competence consists of the following:

- Acknowledging the strengths and benefits that students and staff bring with them to the classroom
- Making connections between what students already know and what they are expected to learn
- Including multiple perspectives in decision-making and instruction
- Validating students' cultural identity in classroom practices and instructional materials.
- Acknowledging students' differences and commonalities
- Being aware of one's own cultural identity and views and the influence those views have on classroom practices
- Engaging families in a culturally meaningful way
- Believing that students from culturally diverse and low-income backgrounds are capable learners

The following are not components of cultural competence:

- Color-blindness or cultural neutrality
- Cultural celebrations at designated times of the year
- Making assumptions that all students from one culture operate in similar ways and have had similar experiences

⁵ [IC 20-31-6-2\(a\)](#).



- Assuming that only minority teachers are culturally competent or that white teachers are not culturally competent

Characteristics of Culturally Competent Organizations⁶

1. Culturally competent organizations have a defined set of values and principles and demonstrate behaviors, attitudes, policies and structures that enable them to work effectively cross-culturally;
2. They have the capacity to value diversity, conduct self-assessment, manage the dynamics of difference, acquire and institutionalize cultural knowledge, and adapt to diversity and the cultural contexts of the communities they serve; and
3. They “incorporate the aforementioned in all aspects of policymaking, administration, practice, and service delivery and involve consumers, key stakeholders, and communities.”⁷

Characteristics of a Culturally Competent Teacher⁸

1. The teacher understands that the way students think, behave, and learn are influenced by factors such as race/ethnicity, social class, and language;
2. The teacher affirms the views of students from diverse backgrounds;
3. The teacher views himself or herself as responsible for and capable of bringing about educational change that will make schools more responsive to all students;
4. The teacher understands how learners construct knowledge;
5. The teacher knows about the lives of his or her students; and
6. The teacher uses his or her understanding of how students’ learn and the knowledge about his or her students’ lives to connect what they already know to the new material they are expected to learn.

⁶ Cross, T., Bazron, B., Dennis, K., and Isaacs, M. Towards a culturally competent system of care, Volume I. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Child Development Center, CASSP Technical Assistance Center, 1989 (8); <http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED330171.pdf>.

⁷ <http://nccc.georgetown.edu/foundations/frameworks.html>.

⁸ [Preparing Culturally Responsive Teachers: Rethinking the Curriculum](#). Journal of Teacher Education, 53(1).



Cultural Competency Resources, Research, and Practice Guides

Disseminating information from outside individuals, websites, programs, or organizations does not constitute an endorsement by IDOE or any of its employees. This list is offered for informational purposes only.

- [Cultural Competence for Teachers](http://www.opb.org/education/minisites/culturalcompetence/teachers.html)
<http://www.opb.org/education/minisites/culturalcompetence/teachers.html>
- [Culturally Responsive Teaching](http://www.alliance.brown.edu/tl/tl-strategies/crt-principles.shtml)
<http://www.alliance.brown.edu/tl/tl-strategies/crt-principles.shtml>
- [How is Cultural Competence Integrated in Education?](http://cecp.air.org/cultural/Q_integrated.htm)
http://cecp.air.org/cultural/Q_integrated.htm
- [Culturally Responsive Classroom Management Strategies](http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/scmsAdmin/uploads/005/121/Culturally%20Responsive%20Classroom%20Mgmt%20Strat2.pdf)
<http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/scmsAdmin/uploads/005/121/Culturally%20Responsive%20Classroom%20Mgmt%20Strat2.pdf>
- [Why Focus on Cultural Competence and Culturally Relevant Practices](http://www.doe.in.gov/teachindiana/docs/why_focus_on_cultural_competence.pdf)
http://www.doe.in.gov/teachindiana/docs/why_focus_on_cultural_competence.pdf
- [The National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems](http://www.nccrest.org/publications/tools.html)
<http://www.nccrest.org/publications/tools.html>
- [What is Cultural Competency: A Teacher's Perspective](http://www.indiana.edu/~iplacc/docs/Educational%20Brief%20What%20is%20Cultural%20Competency.pdf)
<http://www.indiana.edu/~iplacc/docs/Educational%20Brief%20What%20is%20Cultural%20Competency.pdf>
- [Cultural Competency: What is it and Why it Matters](http://www.californiatomorrow.org/media/ccompetecy.pdf)
<http://www.californiatomorrow.org/media/ccompetecy.pdf>
- [Promoting Educators' Cultural Competence To Better Serve Culturally Diverse Students](http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/mf_PB13_CulturalCompetence.pdf)
http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/mf_PB13_CulturalCompetence.pdf
- [Preparing and Supporting Diverse, Culturally Competent Leaders](http://www.iel.org/pubs/diverseleaders.pdf)
<http://www.iel.org/pubs/diverseleaders.pdf>
- [Cultural Responsive Teaching Practices](http://www.niusileadscape.org/op?id=5)
<http://www.niusileadscape.org/op?id=5>
- [Disproportionality Resources](http://www.niusileadscape.org/op?id=0)
<http://www.niusileadscape.org/op?id=0>
- [English Language Learners Resources](http://www.niusileadscape.org/op?id=7)
<http://www.niusileadscape.org/op?id=7>



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SUPPORTING STUDENT SUCCESS

- [Culturally Responsive Practices For Student Success](http://oln.educationnorthwest.org/webfm_send/3)
http://oln.educationnorthwest.org/webfm_send/3
- [Creating Culturally Responsive Classrooms: Why Difference Matters](http://www.doe.in.gov/TitleI/pdf/Culturally_Responsive_Classrooms.pdf)
http://www.doe.in.gov/TitleI/pdf/Culturally_Responsive_Classrooms.pdf
- [Beginning Courageous Conversations about Race](http://www.tolerance.org/tdsi/asset/beginning-courageous-conversations-about)
<http://www.tolerance.org/tdsi/asset/beginning-courageous-conversations-about>
- [Edchange.org Publications](http://www.edchange.org/publications.html)
<http://www.edchange.org/publications.html>
- [Culturally Relevant Teaching](http://www.learnnc.org/search?phrase=culturally%20relevant%20teaching) resources
<http://www.learnnc.org/search?phrase=culturally%20relevant%20teaching>
- [Diversity in Practice: Becoming Culturally Competent](http://www.centre4activeliving.ca/publications/wellspring/2006/oct-culture.pdf)
<http://www.centre4activeliving.ca/publications/wellspring/2006/oct-culture.pdf>
- [As Diversity Grows, So Must We](http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/mar07/vol64/num06/As-Diversity-Grows,-So-Must-We.aspx)
<http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/mar07/vol64/num06/As-Diversity-Grows,-So-Must-We.aspx>
- This [study](#) examined whether having African-American and White middle school students write essays affirming their personal values improved their academic performance and can be accessed at
http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/www/pdf/quickreviews/selfaffirm_020910.pdf.
- [Using Student Achievement Data to Support Instructional Decision Making, Culturally Responsive Resources, Culturally Responsive Classroom Descriptors , Culturally Responsive Lesson Plan Descriptors](#)

Local and National Organizations

Disseminating information from outside individuals, websites, programs, or organizations does not constitute an endorsement by IDOE or any of its employees. This list is offered for informational purposes only.

- [The Equity Project](#)
- [Indiana Project for Latin American Cultural Competency](#) (IPLACC)
- [National Center on Cultural Competence](#)
- [The National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems](#)
- [Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice: Cultural Competence](#)
- [The Center for Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning](#)
- [ASCD](#) (formerly the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development)
- [Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession](#)



Self-Assessments and Toolkits

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- [Promoting Cultural & Linguistic Competency Self-Assessment Checklist for Personnel Providing Services and Supports In Early Intervention and Early Childhood Settings](http://www11.georgetown.edu/research/gucchd/nccc/documents/ChecklistEIEC.pdf) available at <http://www11.georgetown.edu/research/gucchd/nccc/documents/ChecklistEIEC.pdf>.
- [Manual for self-assessment of cultural competence of an academic department or unit](http://nutrition.utk.edu/culture/Manual%20for%20Self%20Assessment%20of%20Cultural%20Competence%20of%20an%20Academic%20Department%20or%20Unit.pdf); available at <http://nutrition.utk.edu/culture/Manual%20for%20Self%20Assessment%20of%20Cultural%20Competence%20of%20an%20Academic%20Department%20or%20Unit.pdf>. (This document was created by Department of Nutrition at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, but is a good resource and guide in the discipline of education).
- Annie E. Casey Foundation's "[Race Matters](http://nutrition.utk.edu/culture/Manual%20for%20Self%20Assessment%20of%20Cultural%20Competence%20of%20an%20Academic%20Department%20or%20Unit.pdf)" toolkit; available at <http://nutrition.utk.edu/culture/Manual%20for%20Self%20Assessment%20of%20Cultural%20Competence%20of%20an%20Academic%20Department%20or%20Unit.pdf>

Suggested Books and Articles

- [Annotated Bibliography of Cultural Competency resources](#) (created by [the Equity Project](#))
- [Annotated Bibliography Beyond the Culture of Poverty Resources](#) (created by the Equity Project)
- Mano Singham, "[The Canary in the Mine: The Achievement Gap. Between Black and White Students,](#)" Phi Delta Kappan, Vol. 80, No. 1, September 1998, pp. 8-15; available at http://principals.mpls.k12.mn.us/sites/ee869d27-88e5-478a-97e1-b5e41772b8f7/uploads/The_Canary_In_the_Mine.pdf.
- Leading with Diversity, Cultural Competencies for Teacher Preparation and Professional Development by Elise Trumball, Elise &, Maria Pacheco; The Education Alliance at Brown University (2005). Download the book at www.alliance.brown.edu/pubs/leading_diversity.
- P. Uri Treisman, "[Studying Students Studying Calculus](#)" College Mathematics Journal, vol 23, 1992, pp 362-72; available at http://www.utdanacenter.org/downloads/articles/studying_students.pdf.
- [Never Work Harder Than Your Students & Other Principles of Great Teaching](#) available at <http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/109001/chapters/Start-Where-Your-Students-Are.aspx>.

Cultural Competency Training and Professional Development

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- [Pacific Educational Group](http://www.pacifieducationalgroup.com/) <http://www.pacifieducationalgroup.com/>
- [Millennium Learning Concepts](http://millenniumlearningconcepts.org/index.html) <http://millenniumlearningconcepts.org/index.html>



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SUPPORTING STUDENT SUCCESS

- [LEAD process](http://ceep.indiana.edu/equity/takingaction.php) <http://ceep.indiana.edu/equity/takingaction.php>
- [Touching the Spirit Teaching Workshop](http://ncebc.org/teachingworkshops/) <http://ncebc.org/teachingworkshops/>
- [Greater Indianapolis NAACP](http://www.indynaacp.org/) <http://www.indynaacp.org/>
- [Intercultural Development Inventory \(IDI\)](http://www.idiinventory.com/) <http://www.idiinventory.com/>